

AMENDMENT

Amendments to the Specification

Please insert a new paragraph 29 and replace paragraphs 30 – 39 as follows:

- [0029] Fig. 13 depicts a perspective detail view of the spur gear articulation mechanism of FIG. 11.

- [0030] FIG. 14 depicts a top view in section of a prior art articulation support plate assembly.

- [0031] FIG. 15 depicts a top view in section of the prior art articulation support plate assembly of FIG. 14 in an articulated position.

- [0032] FIG. 16 depicts a top view in section of a springedly-coupled, single free-end support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

- [0033] FIG. 17 depicts a top view in section of a resilient-coupled, single free-end support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

- [0034] FIG. 18 depicts a top view in section of a spring-fingered, single free-end support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

- [0035] FIG. 19 depicts a perspective view of the spring-fingered, single free-end support plates of FIG. 18.

- [0036] FIG. 20 depicts a top view in section of a springedly-coupled, dual free-end support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

- [0037] FIG. 21 depicts a top view in section of a resilient-coupled, dual free-end support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

- [0038] FIG. 22 depicts a top view in section of a spring-fingered, dual free-end support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

- [0039] FIG. 23 depicts a top view in section of a resilient support plate assembly for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.

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[0040] FIG. 24 depicts a perspective, exploded view of a pair of support plates with bearing contact to a firing bar for the surgical instrument of FIG. 1.